

Missouri Assessment Program

**Communications Arts
Practice Test**

Grade 10

Student's Name _____
(please print first name and last name)

Teacher's Name _____
(please print first name and last name)

School District _____

Building/Room _____

Date _____

Form 46

Do not open test booklet until instructed to do so.

From a Letter to Mrs. Orville H. Browning

By Abraham Lincoln

In 1835, Abraham Lincoln was introduced to the sister of a friend. The friend talked Lincoln into marrying her sister, but when Lincoln and the friend's sister met again, the woman was not at all the way he remembered her. In this letter to Mrs. Orville Browning, Lincoln describes his feelings about being engaged to a woman he didn't like and what finally happened to the prospective marriage.

Editor's Note: Misspellings contained in this letter reflect the original text.

Springfield
April 1, 1838

Dear Madam:

... I had seen the said sister some three years before, thought her intelligent and agreeable, and saw no good objection to plodding life through hand in hand with her. Time passed on, the lady took her journey and in due time returned, sister in company sure enough. This stomached me a little; for it appeared to me, that her coming so readily showed that she was a trifle too willing; but on reflection it occurred to me, that she might have been prevailed upon by her married sister to come, without anything concerning me ever having been mentioned to her; and so I concluded that if no other objection presented itself, I would consent to wave this. All this occurred to me upon my *hearing* of her arrival in the neighborhood; for, be it remembered, I had not yet *seen* her, except about three years previous, as above mentioned.

In a few days we had an interview, and, although I had seen her before, she did not look as my imagination had pictured her. I knew she was over-size, but she now appeared a fair match for Falstaff; I knew she was called an "old maid," and I felt no doubt of the truth of at least half of the appellation, but now, when I beheld her, I could not for my life avoid thinking of my mother; and this, not from withered features,

for her skin was too full of fat to permit of its contracting into wrinkles; but from her want of teeth, weather-beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head, that *nothing* could have commenced at the size of infancy, and reached her present bulk in less than thirty-five or forty years; and, in short, I was not at all pleased with her. But what could I do? I had told her sister that I would take her for better or for worse; and I made a point of honor and conscience in all things to stick to my word, especially if others had been induced to act on it, which in this case, I doubted not they had, for I was now fairly convinced, that no other man on earth would have her, and hence the conclusion that they were bent on holding me to my bargain.

... At once I determined to consider her my wife; and this done, all my powers of discovery were put to the rack, in search of perfections in her, which might be fairly set-off against her defects. I tried to imagine she was handsome, which, but for her unfortunate corpulency, was actually true. Exclusive of this, no woman that I have seen has a finer face. I also tried to convince myself, that the mind was much more to be valued than the person; and in this, she was not inferior, as I could discover, to any with whom I had been acquainted...

All this while, although I was fixed "firm as the surge repelling rock" in my resolution, I found I was continually repenting the rashness, which had led me to

From a Letter to Mrs. Orville H. Browning

make it. Through life I have been in no bondage, either real or imaginary, from the thralldom of which I so much desired to be free.

After my return home, I saw nothing to change my opinion of her in any particular. She was the same and so was I. I now spent my time planning how I might get along through life after my contemplated change in circumstances should have taken place; and how I might procrastinate the evil day for a time. . . .

After all my sufferings upon this deeply interesting subject, here I am, wholly unexpectedly, completely out of the "scrape," and I now want to know if you can guess how I got out of it. Out clear, in every sense of the term; no violation of word, honor or conscience. I don't believe you can guess, and so I may as well tell you at once. As the lawyer says, it was done in the manner following, to wit: After I had delayed the matter as long as I thought I could in honor do, which by the way had brought me round into the last fall, I concluded I might as well bring it to a consummation without further delay; and so I mustered my resolution, and made the proposal to her direct; but, shocking to relate, she answered, No. At first I supposed she did it through an affectation of modesty, which I thought but ill-become her, under the particular circumstances of her case; but on my renewal of the charge, I found she repented it with greater firmness than before.

I tried it again and again, but with the same success, or rather with the same want of success.

I finally was forced to give it up, at which I verily unexpectedly found myself mortified almost beyond endurance. I was mortified, it seemed to me, in a hundred different ways. My vanity was deeply wounded by the reflection, that I had so long been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly; and also, that she whom I had taught myself to believe nobody else would have, had actually rejected me with all my fancied greatness; and, to cap the whole, I then, for the first time, began to suspect that I was really a little in love with her. But let it all go. I'll try and outlive it. Others have been made fools of by the girls; but this can never be with truth said of me. I most emphatically, in this instance, made a fool of myself. I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying; and for this reason; I can never be satisfied with any one who would be block-head enough to have me.

When you receive this, write me a long yarn about something to amuse me. . . .

Your sincere friend,
A. Lincoln

Despite his aversion to marriage, four years later Abraham Lincoln married Mary Todd, from Kentucky, who became his wife of over twenty-two years.

From a *Letter to Mrs. Orville H. Browning*

1. Explain how Lincoln’s feelings for “the said sister” changed from the beginning of his letter through its end. Use details and/or examples from the passage to support your answer.

2. Imagine you are the “said sister” courted by Lincoln. Write a first-person personal narrative from the “said sister” recording the events of the courtship. Include three events from the passage in the correct order in which they occurred.

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3. Evaluate Lincoln's skill in using hyperbole as a literary device and support your answer with two examples from the letter.

4. Lincoln states at the end of the letter, "Others have been made fools of by the girls; but this can never be with truth said of me. I most emphatically, in this instance, made a fool of myself." Do you believe this is a true statement? Use details and/or examples from the letter or from personal experience to support your opinion.

Alternate Constructed-Response Item

Lincoln convinced himself to marry “the said sister” through a series of internal conflicts.

Summarize the reasoning process of Lincoln’s internal conflicts and how he convinced himself to propose marriage to “the said sister.”

Circle the letter of the correct answer for Questions 5 and 6.

5. After all of Lincoln’s worrying about how to get out of marrying the woman, she rejected him. Of which literary device is this an example?
- A. foreshadowing
 - B. irony
 - C. subplot
 - D. symbolism
6. After admitting his misgivings about his resolution to marry “the said sister,” Lincoln writes, “Through life I have been in no bondage, either real or immaginary, from the thraldom of which I so much desired to be free.” What is the meaning of “thraldom”?
- A. servitude
 - B. kingdom
 - C. excitement
 - D. interest

- You will now have 45 minutes for your prewriting activities such as brainstorming, listing, outlining, and writing a rough draft. Use the pages in the test booklet labeled “prewriting” to record your ideas and your rough draft.

Mr. Lincoln’s courtship of the “said sister” is strange compared to today’s customs. Write a paper to your teacher comparing the dating customs of the 19th century with those of today.

[illegible]

Prewriting

[illegible]

Prewriting

[illegible]

Prewriting

[illegible]

Prewriting

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Final Paper

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Final Paper

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Final Paper

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Final Paper

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